

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #324: Being Assertive With Yourself

Hello! Today I'm talking about being assertive with yourself.

What this basically is about is finding the middle ground between being too soft and too hard so you can get yourself moving forward working on your goals and to get yourself to actually do what you've been wanting to do.

Many of you are way too hard on yourself and you think that's going to motivate you and push you but in actuality, it just makes you feel bad and brings you down so you actually lose motivation.

If someone is beating you down, including yourself, you're not going to then take positive action.

You're going to do nothing because that's what we do when we feel down.

Calling yourself a failure, weak, a loser, a lost cause, and telling yourself you'll never be able to do it, you're too broken, or anything that's harsh is going to make you feel bad, hopeless, inadequate, ashamed, feelings that drive *inaction*, not action.

And it usually drives people to give up and stop trying, the opposite of what they're intending for themselves.

So many people quit on themselves, either little quits for a day or two, or big quits for longer, because of how they're talking to themselves. It's what causes them to stop trying and stop putting in effort.

They're causing themselves to stop progressing because they're choosing to speak to themselves so harshly.

And for many people who do this, they aren't actually doing it intentionally.

They might not even be thinking that this is a good way to motivate and push themselves.

It might just be how they've been conditioned to speak to themselves.

Maybe that's how they were spoken to by their parents, or by other role models or authority figures. So they began to speak to themselves that way too, and just kept on doing it because they didn't know how to stop doing it, thought that was the right way or the normal way to speak to yourself, or didn't realize how much of a problem it really was.

But it is a problem, it is changeable, and it's not a useful way of speaking to yourself.

So if that is how you speak to yourself, if you're hard on yourself, if you mentally beat yourself up, if you are harsh with yourself, it needs to stop.

It's not helping you and it's not at all, required self-talk.

So then what should you do?

You've probably heard me and other people talk about how important it is to be kind to yourself.

And it definitely is.

If you mess up, if you make a mistake, if you over eat, if you binge, being kind to yourself is going to be so much more helpful than being hard on yourself and mean.

Instead of making yourself feel worse, you make yourself feel better.

Making yourself feel better with kinder words is a good thing.

But, there are times when being too kind with yourself and too soft with yourself won't help you move forward.

When you make a mistake, most of the time it is going to be most useful for you to being softly kind.

So you're telling yourself things like, "It's okay, you're still learning, you're doing your best, you'll get it, mistakes happen," very kind, compassionate, and encouraging.

There are so many times when I'm coaching people after they binged and that's what they need to hear because they're being too hard on themselves. I offer them kindness, they receive it, and they then start being kinder to themselves too.

If you are someone who is consistently hard on yourself, more kindness is going to help you so much.

But, as I said, sometimes, soft kindness isn't the answer.

Sometimes, you've been soft enough.

Sometimes, what you need is an assertive talking to.

Now, remember, we're finding the middle ground between being hard on yourself and soft kindness.

So you're not going to be harsh with yourself. You're not going to call yourself mean names.

But you are going to be honest with yourself, assertive, and direct.

Not so soft anymore, a bit hard, but not too hard.

For myself, I find this useful when I find myself making the same mistake, or similar mistakes over and over and it's not because I don't know what to do but, because I'm just not doing it.

I'm choosing not to do the work.

So I might say to myself, "Come on Kirstin, let's freakin' go. Stop messing around. Just do it."

I don't feel like I'm being mean to myself at all. But I'm also not being so soft either.

I'm being assertive because I need it.

And there are times when I choose to be assertive with my group members too because I've assessed the situation and I believe the time has come when they need it.

They and I have both been soft enough. Now they need to be pushed a little. They need an assertive talking-to.

And it's truly filled with respect and is coming from a place of love and caring.

And it's what they need in order to get themselves to actually do what they're wanting to do.

The idea of being assertive makes me think of a sports coach on the sidelines yelling something like, "Go! Go! Go! Push harder! Do more!" but not yelling something like, "You weak SOB! You're too slow! You're worthless! You can't do anything right!"

Which is going to motivate you and actually push you to do better and which is going to make you feel bad about yourself?

It's pretty obvious.

Now, what people can find challenging is knowing when to do what.

Well, if you haven't received the message yet, being hard on yourself is never useful. So if you find yourself doing that, redirect. Choose to stop doing that and to choose kindness.

But how do you know when to be soft and kind and when to be assertive?

This is how I determine it for myself and when I'm coaching my group members.

If you're feeling really emotional, be soft and kind. That's most likely what you need to hear in emotional moments.

If you've made a mistake that was a one time thing, be soft and kind with yourself. Making mistakes is normal, it's human, it happens.

If you keep making the same mistake over and over, this is where sometimes it is better to be softly kind and sometimes it is better to be assertive.

Here's how I determine which to do.

If you genuinely don't know why you're repeating this mistake, which is where a lot of people are when they first start working with me in my Stop Binge Eating Program because they've never known someone who can help them understand why it keeps happening, if this happens to you, be soft and kind.

Compassion is so useful when a person just simply doesn't understand why they keep doing something. It's not useful or warranted for you to get upset with yourself for not knowing.

If you do understand why you keep repeating the same mistake but you genuinely don't know how to stop doing it and don't have relevant and useful strategies that will help you to stop making the mistake, be soft and kind.

That's another thing that many people experience because they just haven't been provided with helpful tools or don't have proper understanding for how to use the tools properly. Maybe they know what to do but, they keep running into an obstacle that they aren't even aware of or don't know how to overcome. They don't know even what they're doing wrong.

We do so much coaching on things like that in my program. I can't tell you how many people understand their problem, know what to do, but just don't know how to do it. It's so common. And that's why I'm there, to help them understand how to do it and help them to actually do it.

So it's not useful or warranted for you to get upset with yourself for not knowing how to do something or how to do it properly.

So basically, what it comes down to is if you just don't know something, be kind and soft. Be compassionate.

But, when you have all the understanding, and you know exactly what to do and how to do it and you're still not doing it, it's time for an assertive talking to.

In those times, it's not that you don't know, you just don't want to do it. You're coming up with excuses and at that point, the excuses need to be shut down.

The excuses need to stop being accepted.

There comes a time when you just need to stop excusing, stop using "I don't feel like it" as a reason to not do something, and do it even though you don't feel like it, do it even if you don't want to in that moment, and you're going to get yourself to do it by being assertive with yourself.

“Alright, enough of this, just do it.”

That’s what can get you moving and progressing and can get you to actually, finally do the thing.

No more messing around, no more choosing laziness, no more putting it off.

Do it now. Do it. Get to work. No more dilly dallying, no more excuses, no more “just wanting to do what’s easy.”

Do the hard thing. Get it done.

Be firm and assertive with yourself when you need it.

Push yourself in a respectful way from a place of caring about yourself.

That will light the fire under your butt and get you going. That will help you create the determination and drive that you’re needing.

So, stop being harsh and hard on yourself, be soft and kind and compassionate when you just don’t know, and then of course get help with figuring it out if you’re not able to do it on your own, and when mistakes are repeating and you have all the tools and knowledge and understanding, be assertive with yourself.

But there’s one last caveat with this. If you are assertive with yourself, and you do actually get yourself to make a solid attempt and you don’t succeed, so for example, you are fully committed to not giving in to an urge to binge but then you don’t not give in and you binge, it means there actually is something you don’t know, or you don’t actually know how to use the tools you’re using properly, or you don’t actually have a useful strategy and if that happens, you do not be hard on yourself. Again, if you just don’t know, choose soft kindness and compassion.

Then figure out what you’re missing, what you’re doing incorrectly, what you’re not understanding, and if you have a hard time doing it on your own, get help. And a great place to get help is in The Stop Binge Eating Program, just so you know. So know that it is an option for you.

If you just keep pushing yourself without actually figuring out what you need to do differently, then nothing will change and you won’t get anywhere.

You always need to learn from mistakes and apply what you learn from that lesson.

Alright, so, handle your mistakes in a useful way and sometimes that’s going to mean that you’ll need to be assertive with yourself. But make sure you’re doing it in a respectful and caring way.

Alright, bye bye.